DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 396 135 CE 071 862

AUTHOR Allison, Stan; And Others
TITLE Can the Students Read Our Materials? Look at Their "Cloze"! Michigan Adult Education Practitioner Inquiry Project 1995.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; *Cloze Procedure; *Content Area Reading; High School Equivalency Programs; *Readability; *Readability Formulas; Reading Ability; *Reading Achievement; Reading Comprehension; *Reading Instruction; Reading Tests

ABSTRACT

A group of adult education teachers sought to determine if a readability formula applied to classroom materials provided a match with student reading levels. Cloze tests were used to determine whether students were able to understand the material. In three of the eight samples, the Cloze test showed that the readability test did not accurately indicate material suitability. (Teachers reported research separately because of difficulty in deciding how to present their findings.) The teachers concluded that constructing Cloze tests was a better use of time than figuring out readability using formulas. They also found some evidence that students could read better when using materials in which they were interested. They recommended that, if mixed reading levels occur among students in adult education classes, teachers should use materials with reading levels corresponding to those of the lower readers. Students with higher reading levels could still learn from these materials, but too-high levels would frustrate the slower students and possibly cause them to drop out of adult education programs. (Author/KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 396 135

CE

Can the Students Read our Materials?

LOOK AT THEIR "CLOZE"!

ABSTRACT - A group of adult education teachers wanted to determine if a readability formula applied to classroom materials provided a match with student reading levels. Cloze tests were used to determine whether students were able to understand the material.

It was found that in 3 of the 8 samples the cloze test showed that the readability test did not accurately indicate material suitability. They concluded that constructing cloze tests was a better use of time than figuring out readability using formulas.

Michigan Adult Education Practitioner Inquiry Project 1995

Stan Allison - St. Clair Shores Adult Education
Jo Assink - South Haven Adult Education
Leslie A. Cummings - Jackson Adult Education
Alice Irwin Gordon - Kalamazoo Literacy Council
Michaèl J. Graving - Marshall Adult Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J Assink
A Gordon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE 071 862

 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Can the Students Read our Materials?

LOOK AT THEIR "CLOZE"!

Michigan Adult Education Practitioner Inquiry Project 1995

Stan Allison - St. Clair Shores Adult Education
Jo Assink - South Haven Adult Education
Leslie A. Cummings - Jackson Adult Education
Alice Irwin Gordon - Kalamazoo Literacy Council
Michael J. Graving - Marshall Adult Education

INTRODUCTION

Adult education teachers often find themselves wrestling with the problem of students who are not experiencing success in their classrooms. The students quickly lose interest. Eventually they drop out of adult education just as they dropped out of high school.

We are aware that one of the reasons students are not having success is that the textbooks and other reading materials are too difficult. We have observed, however, that some students who are otherwise poor readers are able to read a seemingly difficult essay from an anthology. We see this occur when the student is especially interested in the subject of the essay. So how can we tell if the materials are too difficult?

WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW

The problem of student failure and the question of how to find out if the reading material fits the student led us to an exploration of student reading levels and content material readability levels. We learned that there are many standardized tests that are short and simple enough for a content area teacher to administer during his\her class period. We read about readability formulas. These are mathematically derived indices based on language variables.

Many computer programs can come up with a reading level after a text sample is entered. We also learned that for various reasons readability formulas do not always determine whether a match exists between the reading level of the student and the readability of the content material. Several authors recommend that content teachers use the cloze procedure because it more accurately indicates whether the student can get meaning from the materials used in the content area class.

RESEARCH PLAN

Our group decided to compare student reading levels (determined by the TABE Survey 7D) with the reading level of materials we use in our classroom (determined by the Fleise-Kincaid readability formula). We would then construct a cloze procedure to determine if the readability formula did in fact provide a match with the students' reading levels. Readability formulas and cloze procedures were used on a variety of reading materials including a newspaper editorial, textbooks, a novel and an essay. These were materials which we typically use in a social studies class.

FINDINGS

Individual research findings are attached.

CONCLUSION

The research findings seem to show that the readability

not always provide a match between the student and the material. In three of the eight samples, this was true. Our group concluded that the cloze procedure provided a more accurate indication of whether students could read the material. Perhaps content teachers should construct cloze procedures instead of using readability formulas to determine reading level. This would be a better use of classroom time. The next step would be to decide what to do with this information. What do we do to assist those students we find who cannot handle the material?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our group learned a lot about doing research and about the problems of working in a group. We discovered that we failed to discuss how to present our findings in a uniform way. Consequently the research is presented differently in each report. This makes our paper somewhat disjointed. We needed an additional meeting following the research to accomplish this. A second problem we encountered is that there was some confusion about the directions for giving a cloze test. One of the books we used suggested reading the passage aloud first. Some of our tests were administered that way. We have learned some lessons for next time!

DETERMINING STUDENT SUCCESS IN SOCIAL STUDIES BY COMPARING READABILITY OF A TEXT WITH THE CLOZE TEST AND TABE TEST

Alice Irwin Gordon. Reading Specialist
4339 Lakeside Drive
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

Michigan Adult Education Practitioner Inquiry Project 1995

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

How does the Reading Level of my student compare to the Reading level and comprehension of the materials used in a Social Studies class?

CLIENTELE:

Cynthia is a 31 year old special education student who did not graduate from high school. She has severe difficulty decoding words.She's employed by a paper company and is a steady worker. She's a divorced mother with a 13 year old daughter. My contact with this student was arranged through the Kalamazoo Literacy Council. This student is highly motivated. I've been tutoring this student since the beginning of July.

Purpose Of This Study

Our MAEPIP group wanted to investigate the correlation between the reading level of our students (Based in the TABE Survey D) and the Reading Level of the Texts(Based on Flesch-Kincaid Readability Scale- Computer Program) and the scores on the cloze and the Tabe Test

Texts Used

The American People: Their History to 1900 published by Steck-Vaughn
Cloze : The Confederation. 8.4 Readability (Flesch-Kincaid Scale)
One Nation Many People Published by Globe Feron
Cloze: Diverse 7.9 Readability (Flesch Kincaid Scale)

Test Administered

TABE Survey D: Reading Level	Cloze: The Confederation	Cloze: Diverse
Reading Level 6.6-8.9	Readability Level -8.4	Readability Level 7.9

Test Results

TABE:(SURVEY D): READING LEVEL	CLOZE: The Confederation	Cloze: Diverse
Cindy. . . .8.0 grade level	. . . . 44% (Instructional Level)	. . . . . .31% (Frustration Level)

Findings

As a result of these tests I found that my student's scores coincided with the results of the Tabe Test, and The Cloze Test. She score at the eighth grade level on both the Tabe D Survey, and the cloze test " The Confederation" showed that she could handle the text on an instructional level. The other Cloze Text on"Diverse" showed that Cynthia scored at the frustration level which indicated that the material was too difficult for her to comprehend. Perhaps this student's exposure to information or interest about social studies was limited. .She didn't have the language or the background to deal with this subject. Her prior knowledge and interest in S.S. was limited so when she took the Cloze activity in Social Studies she barely was able to relate to it.

This study on the use of the Cloze test can be a useful tool in assessing the reading material in a classroom, and a way of identifying the kinds of material the student will have success or not. By using a cloze test it verifies the level on reading the student is on therefore indicating for a teacher what other materials might serve the student in a better way. It also indicates that responding to informational text and comprehending it is a lot different that responding to literature. In the story text (literature) the student has had a lot more experience from grade school on up.

As a result of these tests, I found that the cloze activity is a helpful procedure to assess the match between the students readability level and the classroom text. This procedure might be helpful for all teachers in the content areas when they are using a prescribed text book or other material in the classroom.

In order to make this research valid, the scoring in the Cloze was based on the actual words used in the text. Each participant in this research followed the same scoring procedures.

Test Results

	TABE: Reading Level	CLOZE: The Confederation	CLOZE: Diverse
Sarah	8.6	22%	33%
Tonya	6.1	30%	58%
Bill	10.5	48%	54%
Tony	5.2	28%	36%
Teresa	8.0	36%	52%
Colleena	5.2	6%	18%
Meredith	8.6	30%	45%
Tara	11.2	42%	49%
Melvin	8	18%	14%
Kijafa	1.2	30%	60%

I attempted to find how the reading level of my students (as based of the TABE survey D test) compared to the reading level of the materials (as based of the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale); and to see if they could comprehend the material (as based on Cloze procedures).

The first source I used was "The Confederation" from THE AMERICAN PEOPLE: Their History to 1900 published by Steck-Vaughn. The second source was "The People of the United States are Diverse" from ONE NATION MANY PEOPLE published by Globe Feron.

The readability level of the first source, according to the Flesch-Kincaid was 8.4, and the second was 7.9. The Cloze procedure showed that, except for one student, their scores were higher for the second test. That student had a very low TABE test score and had given up while doing the second test. The only difference in administering the Cloze procedures was that the first test was read aloud to them and the second one was not. According to information from ASSESSING READING ABILITY, if students perform between 40% and 60% the material is at their instructional level. If students score above 60% the material is too easy ; if they score below 40% it is too hard.

The first text (The Confederation) was from material I used last year while the second is from material I am currently using. Ten students were tested. According to the Cloze procedure on the first piece, only two students would find this material at their reading level while the rest would find it too hard for them. The same experiment on the " People of the U.S. are Diverse" showed that five would be able to handle it, while four would find it too difficult for them. When comparing these results to TABE results I found that while the first piece was rated at eighth grade, fourth month, those students who scored at the 8th grade level couldn't handle it. The second piece seemed to match both TABE levels and readability level. It was rated at 7th grade, ninth month, and those with 7th grade or above TABE scores rated 40% or above on the Cloze procedure. The results did not surprise me. I suspected that the old material was quite difficult for many of my students.

Jo Assink
South Haven Adult Education

Michael J. Graving
124 Leslie Street
Lansing, Michigan 48912

Michigan Adult Education Practitioners Inquiry Project 1995

Research Question

Are the reading materials used in adult education, to difficult, to easy, or suitable for adult learners?

Methods of data collection

Our MAEPIP group wanted to compare the reading level of adult students, with the readability level of texts and other materials used in adult education classrooms. First, we determined the reading level of the student by administering the TABE test form D. Second, we determined the readability level of the text, by using the Flesch Kincaid Scale computer program. Third, we administered a Cloze test to see if the correlation did indeed exist.

Texts used

Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (New York: The Modern Library 1894) p. 1.
Readability level: 7.3 Flesch Kincaid Scale

William Manchester et al., *The Social Fabric* (Boston, Toronto, Little Brown and Company 1981) p. 323.
Readability level: 13.0

Student profile

The tests I administered were to an adult education English class. Nine students were present the night of the testing, four men and five women. They were between eighteen and thirty years of age. Most of the students are employed.They are all from a rural community. The students have a wide

range of reading levels. The lowest score on the TABE test was a 5.7, and the highest was a 12.9+. One third of the class scored 12.9+ on the test.

Results

I discovered that a correlation does exist between the reading level of the student and readability level of the text. The three students who scored 12.9 on the TABE test were able to score in the 40 to 60% range on *The Social Fabric* Cloze test, indicating that the material is suitable for these three students. The students who scored below 12.9 on the TABE test, also scored below 40% on *The Social Fabric* Cloze test, which indicates that the material is to difficult for them.

The three students who scored 12.9+ on the TABE test also scored above 60% on *The Red Badge of Courage* Cloze test, indicating that the material was to easy for them. Four other students who scored between 9.4 and 10.5 on the TABE test, also scored above 60%, indicating that the material was to easy for them as well. One student scored 8.6 on the TABE, scored 52% on the Cloze, Indicating that *The Red Badge of Courage* is adequate for that one student. Two other students who scored 5.7 and 6.6 on the TABE test, both scored below 39% on both *The Red Badge of Courage* and *The Social Fabric* Cloze tests, indicating that both texts are to difficult for them.

Conclusions

This research confirms what we have known all along. Adult education classrooms are filled with students with a wide range of reading skills. In this case the lowest reading level was 5.7, and the highest was 12.9+. This makes the selection of reading materials a difficult choice. Does one select materials that are adequate for the lower level readers, or the higher level readers? I would recommend choosing materials for the lower level readers. A student who is reading at a 12.9+ level can still enjoy, and learn from a book like *The red Badge of Courage*. However, a student who is reading at a 5.7 level would become frustrated with a text like *The Social*

Fabric, and not do well in the class. This could have a negative effect on the student's attitude toward reading and learning, and effect self esteem.

Having said this, I also believe (although my research does not prove this) that personal interest plays an important role in the student's comprehension of a text. This would be a question worthy of further research.

As a result of this research, I found that the Cloze testing is a valuable procedure to asses the match between the students' reading level and the readability level of the text. I recommend this procedure to all adult educators.

The area of this team research is St. Clair Shores in Macomb County. St. Clair Shores is a city of approximately 70,000. There are three separate school districts: Lake Shore, Lake View, and South Lake. The city also has a unified adult education program. The students who participated in this research consisted of 11 males and 5 females, with an age range of seventeen to forty-six.

On October 3, the first kloze analysis was done using the United States' History textbook (Comprehensive History of the United States by Roberts and others) on pages two through three. Ten students successfully completed the process. An analysis of the text using the Flesch-Kinciad reading level indicator resulted in a reading level of 9.2.

On October 10, the second kloze analysis and the TABE 7D Reading Survey Test were given. The kloze analysis was from an editorial in the September 24, 1995 Detroit News, titled "Creating handgun on demand process would promote a vigilante mentality and crime." Only three participants successfully completed the process. An analysis of the text using the Flesch-Kinciad reading level indicator resulted in a reading level of 12.2. The TABE mean score was a 7.1 reading level.

The conclusion from these two exams indicates that although the textbook sample was slightly above the TABE reading level, the students were able to comprehend the subject matter. However, the newspaper editorial, which was significantly higher than their reading level, was incomprehensible to the students. It would require further research to determine if editorials in general would be feasible to use with this class.